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Songs of an Airman and Other Poems

By

Hartley Munro Thomas

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**SONGS OF AN AIRMAN
AND OTHER POEMS**

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HARTLEY MUNRO THOMAS

Songs of an Airman and Other Poems

By

Hartley Munro Thomas

Royal Air Force

With an Introduction by

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Kingston, Canada

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MY SONG

ISING of the arms of men,
 Of the love that we battle for,
Of Spring, that must come again
 With the flowers, and the crash of war.

I sing of the air, and all
 Who wear wings and are unafraid;
And I sing of the men who fall,
 And the graves that their daring made.

I sing of the dreams of men
 On the ground and in air above;
Each time I must sing again
 Of the cause, and the cause is love.

H.M.T.

CONTENTS

	PAGE
SONGS OF AN AIRMAN:	
"Per Ardua ad Astra" - - - - -	21
The Canadian Airman - - - - -	22
Song of the Contact Patrol - - - - -	23
After the Hospital Dance - - - - -	25
Above the Clouds - - - - -	26
"Two of Our Machines Are Missing" - - - - -	28
The Land of Fantasie - - - - -	29
Air Dreams - - - - -	32
Lieut. _____, "Missing, Believed Killed" - - - - -	33
Heaven's Blue - - - - -	34
At Cambrai - - - - -	35
British Columbia Aviators - - - - -	36
The Chivalry of the Air - - - - -	37
Waiting - - - - -	39
Moriturus Ego - - - - -	41
Children of the Air - - - - -	42
Ad Astra - - - - -	43
Hymn for Aviators - - - - -	44
CANADA AT PEACE:	
Canadian Hymn - - - - -	47
The Song of the Rivulet - - - - -	48
The Smile - - - - -	49
Song of the Snowflake - - - - -	50
Going West - - - - -	52
The Song of the Prairie - - - - -	54
The Prairie Winter - - - - -	56
The Land We Love - - - - -	57
CANADA IN THE WAR:	
Serajevo - - - - -	61
The Blonde Brute - - - - -	62
Canada Unite! - - - - -	64

	PAGE
The First Call - - - - -	66
At Sea - - - - -	67
Trees of England - - - - -	68
The Night Crossing - - - - -	69
France - - - - -	70
The Teuton Tourney - - - - -	72
The Route March - - - - -	74
Hymn Before Action - - - - -	75
The Narrow Pass - - - - -	76
Langemarck - - - - -	78
Festubert - - - - -	79
Consecration Day, 1915 - - - - -	80
Woods of Flanders - - - - -	82
The Voice from the Storm - - - - -	83
The Somme - - - - -	84
Vimy Ridge - - - - -	85
The Song of Vimy Ridge - - - - -	87
The Comrade in White - - - - -	88
In a French Orchard - - - - -	89
The Trench Poppy - - - - -	90
The Pipes of War - - - - -	91
To Our Russian Brother Officers - - - - -	94
The Call from Overseas - - - - -	96
The Hindenburg Lines - - - - -	98
Cambrai - - - - -	99
The First Who Came - - - - -	101

INTRODUCTION

I

WHEN Freedom called, Canada responded with alacrity; proud to fight side by side with the Motherland and all the overseas Dominions—Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, India and Newfoundland—in defence of a threatened civilization. The sea was no barrier, neither were the mountains. Threading the passes, winding along the trails, stemming the rapids, breasting the waves, they came together alike from the remotest hamlet and the most populous centre, the clerk at the counter vying with the workman, the farmer, the miner, the trapper, the fisherman, as to who should be the first to enlist. East was West, and West was East, and the twain met on the battleground.

The universities and schools were not behind in their loyalty and devotion to the flag. Just as in the Old Land, so also in the New Lands, the class-rooms became silent, both teachers and taught putting on the uniform. Indeed the drain on our student numbers might have been called excessive, were it not admitted that the coming leaders in the land must be allowed to lead now. So the choicest of our manhood, obeying the voice of an imperilled humanity, sailed away to Europe, and with them, when his turn came, went Hartley Munro Thomas, to do his part.

It seems at first a strange thing, this relation of poetry to war. Who can forbid the singer to sing of arms and the hero? Who will refuse to recognize the glory of sacrifice? Who is there who does not stand in amazement before the spectacle of youth flinging away its normal future, and rushing like an athlete into the terrible game? They live for ever who offer themselves in a great cause, and the poets sing of them, Homer,

Virgil, Shakespeare. Even Milton reaches his noblest harmonies when chanting of battle.

In other days this may have resulted in a glorification of war, with all its pomp and movement. And even to-day the externals of the strife may entrap the unwary artist's fancy. But below the pageant there is always the human soul; and the poet when he strikes his surest note, celebrates the unselfish devotion of men, through war, indeed if it must come, to the common weal.

Canada has not yet fully felt the priceless value of expressing herself in poetry. Excuses for our shortcomings are offered; that we have been preparing the way, building our commercial, our national, edifice, and what not. And indeed the impartial reader of Canadian history will be disposed to grant that a very large proportion of our ablest men have entered the public service, in some cases turning reluctantly away from the inviting field of literature.

But when does the call to public service cease? When can it be said that foundation-laying is past? Everywhere the word "reconstruction" is now used, and reconstruction is just laying new foundations. It would seem as if pioneering were the permanent occupation of the makers of nations; and to postpone literature until pioneering is over is a dangerous proposal. All the more honor to those who amid the chaos of the world struggle are able to gain possession of themselves for a moment, and seek to sing. The passing hour is theirs, and they seize it, not knowing whether they will live to see their words in print. Just as in all the welter of war the carol of the birds lifts itself into the air; and its silver note, like a shaft of white light, fills the brief pause between the shell bursts, so and even more wonderfully the poet raises his song between one military duty and the next, not knowing the moment when the lute will be for ever stilled. When we in the background are

often satisfied to hold ourselves in suspense, waiting for the morrow's news, how supremely grateful we should be to him who dares not wait, but thankful to Heaven for one day more of life pours out his heart in song.

II

When the war broke out young Hartley was just eighteen, and was taking an honors course in History and Political Science in Queen's University at Kingston. He enlisted immediately, only to find himself unfit. Thereupon he settled down to take his officer's training, and was at once given the position of war editor of the *Regina Province*. After this experience in journalism, he taught school in a settlement of Germans and Swedes in southern Saskatchewan until he became fit for service. Then going home to Vancouver, he was given a commission in the 131st Westminsters, and, at the outbreak of the Somme offensive, was one of a special draft of officers sent forward. Thus he served with the Western Scots, and in one of his last poems, *The Pipes o' War*, can be seen the pride he took in his Highland regiment. He was proud of Highland blood, and the tartans meant much to him. After the taking of Vimy Ridge he was transferred to the Royal Flying Corps, enthusiasm for which had long filled his letters. He was soon flying with Sir Julian Byng's army and shared in the adventures of the Cambrai offensive. Of course the usual share of mishaps and excitement came to him, and on one occasion during the Cambrai affair he and his comrade, as they crashed, had no hope of ever enjoying another meal save in a German camp. But they found their way back, and a reminiscence of this and similar common experiences, is found in the *Moriturus Ego*. Mainly engaged in the work of artillery observation, he gives a glimpse of the less known task of the air service in *The Song of the Contact Patrol*. The correspondent from whom I have

received most of the foregoing facts concludes, "We hope that if he lives through the war he will be able some day to write a sustained poem." Every reader will echo the hope.

III

A few brief extracts from the poet's letters will give the reader an interesting glimpse of his views and personality. Most of the verses were written in the body of letters to his home, quite spontaneous productions, evoked apparently by some reference to recent incidents. To some criticism by his sister he replied:

"I am very conscious of the failures in my verses, but will mention a few things to explain though not to condone their dilettante nature.

"I am eager to read; and a volume of Shelley, or Keats, or anyone at all, would be so welcome here. I have no opportunity of hearing what my stuff sounds like for I am not a wandering, long-haired poet, tramping through fields and woods, but a subaltern of a jolly fine mess. So I cannot read aloud. Also remember that if I am vague or crude, the thunder of cannon referred to is *real* thunder of *real* cannon knocking Sam Hill out of *real* live men. It is hard to make poetry out of the beastly mess that shells make, and my poor vocabulary simply dries up when describing the actual incidents of battle, just as men are speechless when they have a narrow squeak. Shells *do* screech and that's all there is to it, Puddles *are* purple after battle, and death is the most live thing in any kind of military show.

"Expressions like 'the vast' do describe the feeling of mounting into the air. There is an expansive feeling of vastness—itself very vague—when you rise into the air. It just opens up to swallow you. You tear along at a hundred miles an hour, up and down, round

and round, and you never see the slightest hint of a limit to the sky, for literally there is none. Remember above all, that I write simply to amuse myself and for no other reason."

A glimpse is had of the inner world of the soldier's emotions:

"Compare the emotions awakened in a soldier in one week with those that come to a banker in a life time. The cup of war is filled with blood and tears, but it contains the Elixir of Life. What else could produce such sacrifice and nobility, or such hopes? Yet the great hope is not simply to live for living's sake, but to see Canada again, where some one will feel proud, and say 'Thank you.'

"A soldier read in one of the papers from home a plea for toleration of those who 'do not believe in war.' Tommy's remarks are nor for repetition. He had passed through fire into the wonderful new world, and had come back to hear one speaking the language of the old world. It is like the emotion of a physician who has nursed a mother back to life, and then meets a Christian Scientist who 'does not believe in pain.' Only Tommy has not been trained to use the language of the physician.

"I think of Canada as I do of you and mother. I care not whether Germans be Junker tyrants or laborite martyrs. In any case they have insulted what we love best, and we will help to put them out of business. We have to shoot people who are personally harmless because they have indelibly insulted what we hold highest. So you see why I like your letters, and why I fight for Canada. I like your letters because you are my sister, and I fight for Canada because I am a Canadian. We can weave philosophy and religion all over our family affection and patriotism, but why

should we? It only uses a lot of ink and my candle is burning low."

This naturally suggests the much discussed question of the religion of the soldier, and Thomas is quite clear on the point:

"The Canadian soldier is not technically religious; yet he is a real man. Although for excellent physical and moral reasons he tries to avoid sentimental talk about his job, yet he has a profound belief that all is well, and he means to help to keep it so. He cannot understand a religion which is a distinct element in one's life. His religion is his job, and this includes belief in his job and love for those for whom he works, Lost in the mighty forces of the army, I feel that to be a good soldier is in itself a religion.

"Last Sunday I went to the French church. The music was delightful; and I listened to a service sung in a language which was used ere the German was heard in Europe. The nave was full of British officers standing before the altar instead of 'orders of the day,' and one felt that after all the altar is the centre of civilization, so I bowed to the altar."

IV

A word or two may be permitted about the poems themselves. A few of these, those found chiefly in "Canada at Peace" are, in a measure, experimental both in manner and subject. They are evidence, as I think, that Thomas, while still a boy at college, had already the idea that the writing of poetry was a serious aim, and that the masters should be closely studied. So he tests his powers of versification while at the same time manifesting considerable freedom in his choice of themes.

"Not the laugh of harsher chaffing,
But the quiet laugh of snowflakes,"

may suggest Longfellow to the reader ; and—

“I come from the endless misty sky,
From the silver realms above;”

may suggest Shelley ; and

“Weep ye for a prince laid low !”

Tennyson ; and as a correspondent suggests, “there are distinct reminiscences of the rhythm of Service. He loved his native land, too, and sings of it feelingly, particularly its broad landscapes and great potentialities.

Then the war comes. Deep human impulses must have been beating in his heart, or the war could hardly on the instant have called forth so strong, so rich, so original a note as we find in *Serajevo*, whose words have caught solemn tolling of the bell.

“Not the drops that start the grasses
On thy pastures, fields and passes, is the rain :
Drops are salt with bitter sorrow,
Weeping for the gaunt to-morrow ; tears in vain.”

This is not poetizing. These are the words of one whose thoughts are far thoughts, and whose feelings are stirred by events of world significance. It is possible that even in some of these first war poems the young author is still a little self-conscious, slightly anxious to “lift himself to the level of his destiny,” to use an expression of D’Arcy McGee’s. But it is for a brief moment only. When he actually reaches the front, and finds peace in self-effacement, the poetic spirit is, I think, without a flaw. We listen to him with a quickened pulse. In this mood we pass from Langemarck to Festubert, and thence to the Somme, Courcelette and Vimy Ridge, names which Canada will not willingly let die. At Lange-marck—

“Tis a Maple wall that foemen feel.”

At Festubert—

"Were you there?
Mud and blood and evil smell,
And barking parapets of hell,
And each redoubt
That sputtered out
Its snapping death, and every shell
Are branded on your memory
Since Festubert."

In *The First Who Came* the poet says his fine tribute to the thirty thousand men "who paid the toll."

"Still we must carry on,
Since all the rest are gone,
On earth, in mine, through cloud we press ahead;
But as we crown each crest,
Our backs still to the west,
We see our leaders, shades of comrades dead."

But perhaps the most perfect work Thomas has done is to be found in his songs of the air. Possibly it is simply a growing power of expression accompanying a swift deepening of his manhood. Possibly absorption in a phase of the war which is completely in accord with his temperament accounts for something. Possibly this new air life touched a new hidden spring in his soul. It is not too much to use Wordsworth's word "inevitable" of these poems. If it is not out of place to quote brief fragments, such lines as these lead us into the very atmosphere of the skies:

"Where the lights are not so high"
"When he's idle on the ground"
"Where clouds are floors,"
"The story
Of men who will ever sail free in the blue"
"No God set a bound
To the embrace of the skies."
"Ours the wind against the eyes."

But we would surely miss what I may perhaps call

the message of the poet, if we did not feel that the air had released him in some way from the fetters of our mortal life, and given him a vision of another land. So we read—

“Proudly we sail through the gates of Valhalla;
Proud of our task and despising the pain.”

“But the dreamland plane, when the lovelight gleams,
Must always attain the skies.”

“Where the hero fell asleep
With a smiling face.”

“Death, I am willing to meet your embrace,
I know you of old, and the lure of your face
Some day may win me, and far from above,
Through space I shall spin to the goal of all love.”

And then comes, if I may venture to judge, the perfect piece:

A raindrop on the leaf
Of a rose is here;
The purest form of grief
Is a sunbeam's tear.

The airman who is slain
Has a petal shroud;
And he feels the gentle rain
From the mourning cloud—

Where comrade sunbeams leap
In the open space;
Where the hero fell asleep
With a smiling face.

It is with deep pain that we think of the gifted men who have fallen, Brooke, Hankey, McCrae and others. Thomas, the poet of the air, is of their company. As one of our earlier poets has said, the great light is clearer for their light, and the great soul stronger for their soul, though fame remember them with no familiar name.

S. W. DYDE.

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SONGS OF AN AIRMAN

"PER ARDUA AD ASTRA"

(The Motto of the Royal Air Force)

TO the stars we rise on our flimsy wings,
For duty has ordered "Go";
As the skylark mounts at the dawn and sings,
When Nature has told her so;
As the stars themselves sail round in rings,
Which none but the gods may know.

To the stars we rise, though we see them not,
And the clouds are about our plane;
And the end may come with a sudden shot,
And then but a moment's pain;
As the clouds themselves dissolve to nought,
When theirs is to give men rain.

To the stars we rise with our soaring dreams,
Nor is it an easy rise,
For the fact of pain and of death it seems
Has made of all life surmise;
But the dreamland plane, when the lovelight gleams,
Must always attain the skies.

THE CANADIAN AIRMAN

GREAT is the land who has given her children
Pride in their birth, and the courage to stand
Till, rended and torn and destroyed in the heavens,
They mingle their dust with the soil of their land.

Nothing is freer than spaces of heaven,
Far from the puny desires of the crowd;
Only the boldest, and sons of the Westland,
Can conquer the empire far over the cloud.

Proud of the mother who bore the pain for us,
Glad that we ride for her honor at last,
Thankful that we by our pain now defend her
In chivalrous battle above the grey vast.

Then, in the hour when we spin to destruction,
Death clinging near to the wings of our plane,
Proudly we sail through the gates of Valhalla;
Proud of our task and despising the pain.

THE SONG OF THE CONTACT PATROL

THERE is war in the air! We go
Where bullets are swift and low,
(But we have bullets and bombs as well)
Into the path of the storm and shell.
Bullet for bullet, and bomb for bomb,
From Nieuport Bains to beyond the Somme,
We hurl from our dizzy machines—
That is what warfare means
For them who make war in the air.

There is war in the air! We fly,
And sooner or later, die;
For we are trustful of flimsy wings,
Trustful of engine and “prop” that sings—
Bullet for bullet, and bomb for bomb,
From Nieuport Bains to beyond the Somme.
And, Oh! that the people be true,
Who make us our planes anew,
Yea, they must be true to the air.

There is war in the air! We go
Though clouds and the rain are low.
For we have duty beyond the guns,
Bringing the curse of the air on the Huns—
Bullet for bullet, and bomb for bomb,
From Nieuport Bains to beyond the Somme.
And, Oh! that the people be wise
Who plan for the war in the skies,
For we must wage war in the air.

There is war in the air! We fly:
Both storm and the foe are nigh.
But we have many a shot to fire,
Diving from cloud to the edge of the mire—
Bullet for bullet, and bomb for bomb,
From Nieuport Bains to beyond the Somme,
For each we have given two;
And better, for all we do,
Is still to wage war in the air.

AFTER THE DANCE AT THE HOSPITAL

LITTLE laughter, little talk,
Little music, little walk,
Where the lights are not so high,
Dancing on the level floor,—
What could flying man want more
When he's landed from the sky?

Little loving, Oh! so slight,
In the early quiet night,
Though the world is falling round,
Careless as in peaceful days,—
What could flying man more praise
When he's idle on the ground?

Little memory, little smile,
We shall take away; for while
You are tending broken men,
We are flying through the air,
Dropping death below us there,—
We are in the war again.

ABOVE THE CLOUDS

THE caves of shadowed cloud,
Opening to receive us there
Under downy cliffs, and proud
Tall pinnacles of silvered air,
Lead to dominions, undefined
By border framed in mortal mind—
The air-world! None
But airmen live 'twixt cloud and sun.

The temple of the sky
Towering over all the plain,
Floats beyond us as we fly
On toward the misty main.
There in oriflamme of cloud
At sunset, sits in scarlet shroud
The Air-God. None
May pierce the mystery of the sun.

His children of the light,
Misty figures all the day,
Chasing wisps of cloud from sight,
Dancing in and out at play,
Laugh at our shadow on the storm
Below us—fays unknown, they form
The Air-Power. None
May know how all their tricks are done.

The fortune of the sky
Shaping all our puny tasks,
Plays around us as we fly.
But its purpose? No one asks.
There, in a second, as we flash
Past danger, fortune sends the “crash”
To end it. None
May learn their future from the sun.

And so, upon the land
Laughing through our idle fear,
Drinking from the jewelled hand
That Ease would hold so near,—
Here, we who risked our lives above,
May gamble for our souls, with love.
The Air-Men! None
Dare blame the sportsmen of the air.

We are not as the rest
Counting life by wealth or tears.
We upon the storm-cloud's breast
Are aged in hours not years.
There we're measured by the foe
We've conquered. One may lay us low
Forever. None
May fail and live, 'twixt cloud and sun.

"TWO OF OUR MACHINES ARE MISSING"

—*British official report.*

STARS of the night, who have travelled the spaces
Farther than ever our feebleness dare,
Say, can you see from your place in the air
The sweeping machines, and the gay boyish faces
Of those whom we knew, and who left us up there?

Often I see in your ocean of shadow
Stars rushing free through the heavens apart;
Say, are they those who with jests at the start
Just rose to the air from our home in the meadow,
Where now are void places—in mess and in heart?

Stars of the night, when you vanish to-morrow
Deep in the shadow that rolls to the west,
Say, will you pass in your voyage o'er the crest
Of horizon, the planes that we search in our sorrow—
The men who were fighting, nor came back to rest?

Brothers are they of the meteor, darting
Fiercely from heaven with flame on its breath;
Say, is it true what the ancient one saith,
"Whom gods would destroy, they make mad?" On
departing
Our comrades were scornful of danger and death.

Stars of the morning will fade in the glory
Of daybreak, and gaily we'll bid them adieu.
Say, will they come with a message from you,
Telling, in signals of sunbeams, the story
Of men who will ever sail free in the blue?

THE LAND OF FANTASIE

ROPELLERS turn,
The engines hum,
The time is come
To dart away,
And find
The wind
At dawn of day,
Is bearing us as on we fly
So swiftly, gently and so high,
To pleasant land of Fantasie.

Where is this land?
Where clouds are floors,
And fluffy stores
Are piled, and grow
So light,
It might
Be faërie snow,
From faërie storm and wind beside,
Where winter is but Christmastide,
In pleasant land of Fantasie.

Lo! here behold
The merry folk,
The faëries spoke
To us about
In dreams.
It seems
We hear them shout,
“We told you all of this in thought
And you but mocked and said, ‘There’s not
Such pleasant land as Fantasie’.”

But here we see
The cherry lip
That seemed to sip
Our sleep away,
We woke
And spoke;
But till to-day,
We saw not who dispelled our dream,
Who wooed us back from things that seem
So strangely true in Fantasie.

And there, the god
The sunbeams own;
With arms outthrown,
Who threw us gold,
That fell
Pell-mell,
And slipped and rolled,
And tumbled down into the clouds,
With sunbeams dancing through in crowds,
From golden land of Fantasie.

Stop! turn away!
Against the sun,
That looming one,
So black and fat
Is he
That we
Have trembled at
In fearful dreams; for he is Death,
And rushing, panting, out of breath,
He drives us out of Fantasie.

The engines stop;
The nose is down;
The green and brown
Of earth is there.
We know
Below
Is home. We stare
Above us and the clouds are past,
And gliding to the turf at last,
We land from flights to Fantasie.
But who has seen,
Or who can feel
The things unreal.
That airmen can
Up there
In air,
Where little man
Is but an alien, blessed or wooed,
Or by an evil gnome pursued,
From airy land of Fantasie?

AIR DREAMS

NO God set a bound
To th' embrace of the skies.
It folds us around
As, light from the ground,
We rise.

We float in the air
Like the petals of flowers;
No thrills can compare
With rapture so rare
As ours.

And God made no skies
As broad as the streams
Of love from your eyes,
That thrill and surprise
Our dreams.

We float in their gleam,
Which goes forth with a kiss;
And deep in our dream
All heaven must seem
Like this.

“LIEUT. ——, R.F.C., MISSING,
BELIEVED KILLED”

A RAINDROP on the leaf
 Of a rose is here;
The purest form of grief
 Is a sunbeam's tear.

The airman who is slain
 Has a petal shroud;
And he feels the gentle rain
 From the mourning cloud—

Where comrade sunbeams leap
 In the open space;
Where the hero fell asleep
 With a smiling face.

HEAVEN'S BLUE

WE ride on the mighty skies
In the endless blue of heaven,
(Worth all the other seven)
To sail where the eagle flies ;
And the sweetest of joys e'er given,
Where the airman lives or dies,
Is the thrilling, deep surprise
To ride in the endless heaven,
In the blue of your smiling eyes.

AT CAMBRAI

H E flew--and has not flown back.
Like birds in the autumn he went—
Oh, when the winter is spent
Will he return in their track?

Yea, come, when the flowers are out?
Oh! when will his music be heard?
Oh! would he come like a bird
Back home in spring,—Dare we doubt?

BRITISH COLUMBIAN AIRMEN

SANG the eagle of the East,—
“Can you tell me whence they come,
 Flying proudly o'er my lair,
With a rushing, throbbing hum,
To the ends of cloud and air;
Flying higher, higher, higher,
Spitting smoke and fearsome fire?
They dive with eerie whine;
Alive they seem, and shine
Against the sun like lake or silvered spire.
They are flying ever higher, higher, higher.”

Sang the eagle of the West,—
“I can tell you whence they come:
 Where the silver glacier shines.
To the beating of the drum
They have marched beneath my pines—
Looking higher, higher, higher,
For the goal of their desire.
Their breath is filled with flame
 And death. And as they came
I saw the cloudbanks lift them from the mire.
So they're flying ever higher, higher, higher.”

THE CHIVALRY OF THE AIR

SONS of the ancient Liberty!
And you, our foemen, sons of Teuton lords!
Sing to the new-born chivalry
That the sky life now affords.

Free is the cult of aeroplane,
As you, our foemen, learn with us flying there.
Bold in heart, in will, and in brain,
Are the knights of cloud and air.

Sing of the throbbing cylinders,
Which friends and foemen hear in the flying hours:
Sing of the Spandau, the Vickers,
Or the Lewis gun of ours.

Brief is the life of flying men,
As you, our foemen, taught us in bitter school;
Briefer is death that greets us when
We have failed to win our duel.

Sons of the two great chivalries,
Both friend and foeman sworn to the cult of air!
Sing in the secret harmonies
That the battle teaches there,—

*"Keen as the eagle in your eye,
Resistless in your will
As comet flying through the sky,
As perfect in your skill
As robin teaching young to fly.*

*"Brothers, swifter in your flight
Than eagles soaring from their lair,
More fierce than comet of the night
That flashes through the wintry air,
And trained to feel and guard the right,—*

*"Well, that cult of aeroplane
Has taught her pupils so,
Who leave the barren street and plain
To toiling feet below,—
'Tis yours to prove the boast not vain."*

WAITING

TRENCHES are ruins of empire;
Roads are but slime where we tramp;
Gloom of the mine ends in failure;
And even the clouds are damp;
But in firebay, in tunnel, in biplane,
Wherever we go to our fate,
We wait for the Princess of Dreamland,—
We're fighting but always we wait.

When snow had clothed the parapets,
And graveyard crosses stood unseen
Against the white,
I thought the light
That glows upon the minarets
Of mountain peaks where she has been,
Had come to France to show
Her vision as I knew it in the West;
But now I know
That only mountains are by her caressed
When clothed in snow.
O tell me! mountains of the Westland,
Will she leave her lofty tower,
For a year, a day, an hour,
With her worshippers in Trenchland?

When lilacs came in April time,
And buds broke out in vernal green,
All England stood
In field and wood,
A theatre for every rhyme
That bird might sing, or wood might mean,—
I dreamed each dainty spot

Was she herself, in dew and violets dressed.

But, as I sought,

Each land and peak made answer to my quest,
"We know her not."

O tell me! woods and lanes of England,
Will she leave her blossomed bower,

For a year, a day, an hour,

With her worshippers in Warland?

And when we climbed the snowy clouds,
And lonely, chased the sunny beams,

Where faeries spoke
Like merry folk,

And flew around us in their clouds,
And sang of memories and dreams

Bohemia's land had brought

In evening hours, made bright by flashing eyes,—
I felt each thought

Of her brought answer from the distant skies,
"We see her not."

O tell me! spirit of gay Joyland

Will she break your mighty power,
For a year, a day, an hour,

Just to visit us in Cloudland?

Trenches are ruins of empire;

Roads are but slime where we tramp,
Gloom of the mine ends in failure;

And even the clouds are damp;
But in firebay, in tunnel, in biplane,

Wherever we go to our fate,
We wait for the Princess of Dreamland,—
We're fighting for her—and we wait.

MORITURUS EGO

I KNOW those arms that are waiting for me,
Gaunt in the sky, like the ruins we see
Looming ahead at the end of the street,
Where danger and terror and filthiness meet.

Death is alluring—as clouds in the sky,
Soft, downy light when floating on high,
When we embrace them, prove clammy and cold:
So is it with death when its raptures enfold.

Death, I am willing to meet your embrace,
I know you of old, and the lure of your face
Some day may win me; and, far from above,
Through space I shall spin to the goal of all love.

But while you are waiting, and I am yet free,
Weave I the bands which are dearer to me,
Binding me tight to the hopes of the past,—
And I am content to be bound to the last.

Riding the winds, not a slave to their breath,
Bound to my hopes, yet a bondsman to Death,
I am not eager, but ready to die;
For I am an airman, a son of the Sky.

CHILDREN OF THE AIR

O H, who would be a groundsman when the sky is clear?

The sun is smiling

Wind is piling

Walls of fluffy clouds, I fear;

For the moment let us fly

To the outposts of the sky,—

Freemen, bold men, children of the Air.

Oh, who would linger idle when the call of war

Is heard like thunder,

And our wonder

Changes to a lust for more

Excitement of the life we know?

“Suck in,” “Contact,” “Let her go,”—

Freemen, bold men, children of the Air.

Oh, who would join the chase now of the flitting Huns?

To air! to battle,

Prove your mettle!

Leave the earth to plodding ones.

Ours the wind against the eyes!

Ours the conquest of the skies!

Freemen, bold men, children of the Air.

Oh, who would be a walker when our life is short?

And foemen cruel

Seek a duel?

Let us join in noble sport.

Ladies, grant us smiles as due

For the jousts we fight for you,—

Freemen, bold men, children of the Air.

AD ASTRA

THE butterfly kissing the flowers,
Flits o'er the grassy plain,
From leaf to leaf with blessing of color,
Sparkling with drops of rain.

The robin flies over the wood,
Rests on the sturdy trees,
From field to field, with chorus of music
Taught by the leafy breeze.

The eagle soars high to the clouds,
Never a resting place,
From hill to hill, with majesty floating,
Diving again into space.

The aeroplane seeking the stars
Rushes with throbbing heart,
From cloud to cloud, with vigor of manhood,
Making the raindrops start.

And who is above the plane,
Angels or imps or naught?
A dream, where we in terrible silence,
Close with the Hun have fought?

And where is the last cloud wisp?
Far from the earth's dry call?
Or is it true there's no end to heaven,—
Our dreams are highest of all?

A HYMN FOR AVIATORS

O GOD of heaven! wrapt in power,
Grant airmen faith to prove their own;
Be with them in the aching hour,
When searching for Thy highest throne;
Save all who sail the dizzy sky;
Grant airmen courage ere they die.

O God of thunder! grant them might,
That they, despising death and pain,
May purge, as bursts upon their sight,
Each blot upon Thy free domain;
Save all who sail the dizzy sky;
Grant airmen victory ere they die.

O God of sunlight! crowned with pride,
May airmen find their task so dear,
That when grim death tears life aside,
Their pride may stay regret and fear;
Save all who sail the dizzy sky;
Grant airmen peace before they die.

CANADA AT PEACE

CANADIAN HYMN

GOD of our Canada, former of mountains,
Bold as the sky and the vastness they seek,
Mighty art Thou, eternal Thy fountains,
Poured from our plains where Thy golden lips
speak.

God, Thou art Holy, the awe of devotion
Is felt in the might of our streams and our woods;
Reverent lies Nature from ocean to ocean,
We would be holy—our homes and our goods.

God, the creative One, God of our growing,
Forming a nation in peace and in strife,
God of all wisdom, in ways of Thy showing,
Guide us to truth, though the dangers be rife.

SASKATCHEWAN, *June, 1914.*

THE SONG OF THE RIVULET

NEVER the same, but changing, I,
Tripping, flowing merrily;
Bubbles live and bubbles die,
I sing through them cheerily.
Brooks come tumbling to my side,
Gaily, happily flowing;
They must die to swell my pride;
Ever must I be growing.
Still I flow to Ocean's plain,
Full well I know so sadly,
That there I cease, my name be vain,
But the Ocean rolls on gladly.

KINGSTON, 1914.

THE SMILE

L AUGH! laugh! laugh! for the merry flakes are twinkling,
And the silver clouds are sprinkling;
Through the sky so grey and boundless
Floats the song that still is soundless,—
Floats the song of twinkling beauty, which a fairy only hears,
Floats the song of laughing snowflakes—of the angel's frozen tears.

Laugh! laugh! laugh! for the sun is shining brightly,
Through the flakes that fall so lightly,
Through the mighty silver cloud,
Through the misty snowflake crowd,
All diffused, yet still 'tis smiling,
While the snow is drifting, piling,
While the flakes are bearing downward all the heaven's dainty faëries;
Wings of spotless whiteness have they whom the whispering breeze now carries,—

Carries, silently yet merry,—
They are smiling, hardly laughing.
Let us laugh with silent laughter;
Not the laugh of harsher chaffing,
But the quiet laugh of snowflakes;
Like the silent laugh of snowflakes as they pile,
Let us learn the silver, silent music of the smile.

KINGSTON, 1914.

SONG OF THE SNOWFLAKE

I COME from the endless, misty sky,
From the silver realms above;
I leap from my throne so wondrous high,
And frolic and gambol, as down I fly
And dance to my fairy love.

My myriad brothers, they play with me,
We sail on the empty air;
We flit like fairies from tree to tree,
With jewelled wings on the wind so free;
We never have thought or care.

I skim o'er my myriad brothers low,
And dance to the whistling breeze;
Then drop on my silver bed of snow,
More quiet than leaves in the fall, that blow
When they part with the moaning trees.

I hail from the misty realms of cloud
Where the sun in silver shines;
I come with the mighty fairy crowd,
And cover the earth with the softest shroud,
When the wind in winter whines.

I rest for months on my silent bed,
And laugh to the silver world;
I pass the merry sleigh's o'er head,
And muffle the horses' heavy tread;
The wings that bore me are furled.

I leap to the dance when the east winds rave,
I rush o'er the face of the earth;
I join my brothers to form a wave
As graceful as ever the artist might crave;
I live but for beauty and mirth.

But still I belong to the misty sky,
To the silver realms above;
And spring's warm sun then shineth high,
And my spirit on earth doth fondly cry
For the silver clouds I love.

I sink to vapor as in a dream,
When the crocus reacheth high;
And float above on a smiling beam
The sun sends down from his melting gleam,
I return to the misty sky.

KINGSTON, 1914.

GOING WEST

WE are rolling o'er the prairie land of gold,
With the threshing dust swift vanishing as
smiles;

And Alberta's beaming sun but scorns the cold
That is crawling o'er the stookless fields for miles.
But we're rolling past the prairie, past the eager, youthful prairie
To a land beyond the mountains, past the cold and unknown mountains,
To the land upon the ocean of the West.

We can scan the cloud birds gather in the west,
Like a dim mirage of elevator peak;
As we watch them they have formed an azure crest;
'Tis no cloud; there are the mountains that we seek!
And they lower across the prairie, o'er the mountain bounded prairie,
For the Westland has her mountains, has her stern and sturdy mountains,
In the land that holds the harbors of the West.

And we slip into the silence of the hills,
And the rock wall looms before us with its dread;
For its snowwhite cap a sense of awe instils,—
'Tis the watchman of the prairie on her bed.
This the guardian of the prairie, of the striving, struggling prairie,
Who can rest behind those mountains, safe behind those frowning mountains,
With their darkness of the valleys of the West.

We can ride no more o'er prairie that we love,
And no more we sweep the wideness of the plains,
For the rocks that crowd forbidding far above,
And the world is carved in narrow trembling lanes.
Yes, the freedom of the prairie, as we rode upon her
vastness,
Now is lost within the mountains as they lock us in their
fastness,
That blots out the sunken sunset of the West.

Yet the stars that shine above us are the same
That have guided us so truly o'er the sage,
And that moon the glacier smiled to as it came,
Is the goddess who outbeamed Aurora's rage
When he blazed across the prairies, which is one with
all the mountains;
But we gaze more on the snow-crest and the stars above
the mountains,
As we cross the rocky ridges of the West.

En route, C.P.R. FROM CALGARY TO VANCOUVER.

THE SONG OF THE PRAIRIE

THE mighty winds of the autumn shall sing the glorious song of the plain,
It is whispered far by the waving wheat, it is hummed by the welcome rain.
The coulees shall whistle it far and wide, and the Lights of the North blaze forth,
The resistless call to the prairies, the endless lure of the North.
The gophers still chirp, the coyotes still howl, the endless west winds blow,
The men of the prairie join in the song, and they are the men who know.

For this is the call that the prairie gives, her call to the bold and free,
“Burst open my coffers, and I shall give both riches and power to thee.
Oh, come to my vastness, and I shall teach the life of the unconfined;
Work, and my golden tresses shall yield the gold thou long’st to find.
To the men who come in the early spring, my crocuses’ smile to greet;
The snow sinks back, and the grass sprouts green, my wolf willows breathe so sweet;
The sun shines bright and rules all the earth, as only it can in the west;
Oh, come to my bosom, ye men of will; I’m longing to show you my best.
To my children who toil all my wealth will I give, I offer them boundless gain,
For twenty years have I offered my gold, and my offers were never in vain.

My humble roses are driven out, my crocuses buried
beneath;
The plough drives on, but within its track, has risen the
golden sheaf.
So I murmur not, and I weaken not, my offer is still as
of old,
Oh! Come, ye men of ambition, I offer you boundless
gold.
I call the ambitious, the strong, not the weak—I've scorn
for the men who crawl;
I will blast their hopes with my hail and frost, I will
burn them like straw in the fall,
For my valleys sigh for the men of will, to them will I
give my plain;
For them will cast my grasses out, and grow them the
golden grain,
So, come ye men from the eastern rocks, ye men from
across the sea,
I offer myself to the world at large: Come, heroes, and
conquer me.
For I am the boundless, the free and the happy, the
wealthy beyond compare.
Oh come, and I'll make you the worthy sons of my
glorious northern air;
Where the sun shines bright, and rules all the earth as
only it can in the west,
Oh, come to my bosom, ye men of Will; I'm longing to
show you my best."

SASKATCHEWAN, 1912.

THE PRAIRIE WINTER

HAVE you traced sweet Nature's features in the snow that falls so lightly?
Have you heard her friendly whisper in the poplar's rustling song?
Have you seen her merry frolic in the hare that leaps so sprightly,
In her children of the coulée, where they scamper all day long.

Have you seen her in her vastness, where she breaks the heart of mortals;
Where the heavy, painful silence almost hurts you, so it seems?
Have you seen her in her grandeur? Seen her freezing, flaming portals,
In the mystic North unconquered, where th' Aurora ever gleams?

Have you felt her mailed hand grip you, when her breath was cold and stinging?
Have you felt the painful throbbing ere she lulled in fatal rest,
With a song from o'er the prairies, in a mournful cadence ringing,
With that mystic song of warning Nature singeth in the breast?

She is sometimes harsh and bitter, oft before her we lie cowering,
When she locks the vitals in a grip more firm than steel,
But the lure is ever with us, and the love is overpowering,
Which the children of the Northland for their mother Nature feel.

SASKATCHEWAN, 1914.

THE LAND WE LOVE

A TLANTIC rolls his kisses on thy lips,—
Those portals of thy message to the world;
The rugged, shaggy head of Maine is bold,
So lightly on thy youthful bosom curled.
The wavelets of the Huron and the Lakes
Reflect the gentle heaving of thy breast,
The lovers of adventure and a name
Have ravished thee with boldness of the West.
The gifts of love are free within thy home,
Thou scatterest from out a maple urn;
Yet some have hearts of cold Laurentian stone,
That warm and cool, yet nevermore can burn.
These rend thy sumptuous beauty as a mine,
And rape thy smiling riches for their store;
Yet lovers of the Beautiful are thine,
Whose passion throbs in wild discord of war.

KINGSTON, 1913.

CANADA AT WAR

SERAJEVO

*June 28th, 1914**

B OSNA-SERA weeping slowly, tolls the bell,
Sera, shed thy tears but slowly where he fell;
Not a storming rain hath ground thee,
From the hills that frown around thee;
Storms of bitter sorrow found thee
In thy dell,
Weep ye, for a prince laid low,
Let the song of sorrow grow,
All the world shall throng to know
Who hath slain?
Not the drops that start the grasses
On thy pastures, fields and passes,
Is the rain.
Drops are salt with bitter sorrow,
Weeping for the gaunt to-morrow;
Tears in vain.

Bosna-Sera, waiting slowly for the world
Crowding on thy vale so lowly, flags unfurled,
Eager see their forces thronging;
'Tis to them these arms belonging,
Bolts of war for further wronging,
Lightly hurled.
Weep, ye hills, like vales below.
Murmuring pine-trees murmur low
A coronach, a nation's woe,
And her sorrow vain;
Thronging foes and tramping horses,
Loud proclaim a nation's forces,
Stamp the plain.
If thou needst, then Sera, weep ye,
Low in sorrow's silence sleep ye,
Till the gaunt to-morrow greet ye;
Blood again.

* The assassination of Crown Prince Franz Ferdinand.

THE BLONDE BRUTE

"It is impossible not to recognize at the core of all these German races, the magnificent blonde brute, avidly rampant for spoil and victory."—*Nietzsche*.

"**T**HREE is the great blonde brute."

Rise, Celts of the Western shores,
Whose silver tongues have burst the chains
Of tyranny that soars
Beyond all human pains.
The sea of thy verdant homes
Has roared a thousand years in vain
If vaunting Teuton domes
Shall lower above thy plain.
The call of thy altar fires
Is one with the sea that endless rolls,
The loftiest desires
Once fed thy poet souls,—
Lo! there is the great blonde brute,
Who crawls on homes from bloody sod:
Shall living Celts stand mute?
Strike! in the name of God.

Rise men of the Southern seas,
Whose piercing mind dispelled the dark
That bowed us to our knees
Before the Grecian spark.
The hills of thy northern lines
Have held aloft the torch of Truth,
In Liberty's own shrines
Beyond the great uncouth,
The call of thy ancient fame
Awakes from slumber, southern pride;
In conquering Roman name
And Italy's beside.

Lo! there is the great blonde brute
Crawling on thrones o'er bloody sod,
Shall Roman lips be mute?
Strike! in the name of God.

Rise Slav of the Eastern plains,
Whose simple faith has held thee true,
Though ever-beating rains
Of heathen dimmed thy view.
The ghosts of thy endless past
That swept away the encroaching hordes,
Have come again at last
To wield the Cossack swords.
The call of thy mother church
Sounds in the voice of the mighty Czar:
Shall faithlessness besmirch
The men who rule so far?
Lo! there comes the great blonde brute
Churning thy plains to bloody sod,
Shall Russia's sons be mute?
Strike! in the name of God.

August 30, 1914.

CANADA, UNITE!

August 5, 1914

O CANADA! dear land we love the best,
Long flourish thou, one nation east and west;
Still for thee we pray, that thou to-day
Shalt prove a nation grand;
The world her best from east and west,
Has placed within thy hand.
O Canada! our Canada!
Let us unite to make one mighty land.

Great is the race, that race which gave us birth,
Whose sons made axe and paddle swing to mirth;
May their glory last as throughout the past,
In the future still to ring!
Till a nation we, as a family,
Each other's praises sing;
O Canada! French Canada!
Long mayst thou here thy brilliant virtues bring.

Great is the race from out the hilly north,
Hardy the men from Scottish hills poured forth;
Both with brain and hand they enrich our land,
(Long may the thistle bloom)
May their caution bold, as in time of old,
Guide us in days of gloom!
O Canada! Scotch Canada!
Let we forget the goal we yield thee room.

Great are the men who sail from England's shores
Sons of the wave, they serve in Freedom's wars;
Still at duty's call may they answer all,
As their English sires have done;
May the ancient fame which abides the same,
Be by their children won;
O Canada! May Canada
Of Mother England prove a worthy son.

Canadians all! then let us all unite,
Norseman and Gael, Celt, Saxon, Slav—all fight
For a glorious fame for the one new name,
And that name be loved the best;
From Atlantic grand to Pacific strand
May evermore be blest
Our Canada! O Canada!
Let us united be, both east and west.

THE FIRST CALL

THE sun was gay, the wind we had
Was over the prairie sweeping;
Like wine that thrills till it makes one mad,
The air was singing a song so sad,—
 Not calling to bitter weeping,—
But stirring minds by its whispering things,
Such as bugles tell and the trouvère sings.

We saw the rifles in hands of men,
 Bayonets gleaming brightly,
And lines of horses across the glen,
Climbing up to the plain again,
 With cannon drawn so lightly.
These rolled along, and the song they sang,
Was to throbbing drum and to cymbal's clang.

Whence came this song of a martial host,
 Here in the land of farming?
And whence this whisper from coast to coast,
So stirring men with desire to boast,
 With vaunting oaths alarming?
The spirit who forced our sires to roam,
Had unfurled his wings; so we fled from home.

The sun was gay, but the wind was grave,
 The grasses were eastward bending
To hasten the answer prairie gave,
When Empire called for a hand to save,
 Her khaki sons were lending
Their all, nor waited that king should ask.
They had come already to share the task.

SASKATCHEWAN, *August, 1914.*

AT SEA

O MOTHER BRITAIN, at last we bow
Before thy might upon the sea,
That saves our homes and liberty,
To wear thy cross, while ever thou
Protectest Truth and Chivalry.

Here, Mother Britain, use our arms,
Not empty, but with blade and gun,
To strive and build against the Hun
A wall of maple, till alarms
Are past, and Honor's cause be won.

So Mother Britain, we have bowed
Before thy throne, but not as due
Alone for all we owe to you;
But rather, as thy sons, we're proud
We share the blood of Britain, too.

TREES OF ENGLAND

TREES of England! and your noble line,
 Majestic over park and lawn—
 What noble grace for leaping fawn
 To model all his movements on;
 What stately form for rustic shrine.

Ye trees of England! Oh, but hear my tale
 A wandering errant man-at-arms,
 Out searching Beauty, and the wild alarms
 That threaten her—in rural farms,
 I see you quivering in the summer gale.

Here, trees of England! I have learned the view
 That spirited each ancient knight,
 Beholding Beauty in a bitter plight;
 And, leaping forth to press the fight,
 I see the weeping princess now in you.

O pearly raindrops from the dripping leaf!
 You are but tears the princess shed;
 And foliage, but the shapely head
 Enwrapt in tresses on the bed,
 Till gallant knight had won relief.

So trees of England! 'tis your noble stand
 That calls us dreaming, fighting men
 From dreams to truth—we see again
 The ancient beauty of the English glen
 Since Arthur and his Table ruled the land.

THE NIGHT CROSSING

O H, the dark night! and darker waves,
And piercing beams;
Their roadway seems
A path for terror
And grim horror
To leap from clouds, and hew out graves.

Oh, the dark mass! a passing ship,
With red, green stars
Upon its spars;
An alien speaking;
Tackle creaking;
Oh, eyrie voices of the trip!

Then a light mist! and brighter space,
And lines of street,
That seem to meet
In one large mirror
Of the harbor;
We come into the landing-place.

FRANCE

ALL HAIL, thou nation born of noble blood,
Thou victor's home, thou once all-conquering
land,

We hail thee still, despite the surging flood
Of foreign tyranny which sweeps thy strand.
We call to mind how thine was once the hand
Which ruled Europe in a glorious age.
And not by arms alone, as warriors planned,
But by thine artist, poet and thy sage.
'Tis thine the glory which we find in history's page.

When mighty armies out from Rome were hurled
To win the world and sink to victims' grave,
'Twas thou didst save the treasure for the world—
The treasure which weak Rome could never save,—
The Roman Law and tongue; while wave on wave
Of roaring Teuton tempests flung their might
Against the force which made the world behave
'Twas thou didst pay the price; though lost the fight.
The very conquerors turned their swords to strive for
right.

From thee we gained the greatest gift of all,—
'Twas bought with blood and sealed with dreadful
deeds.
The Revolution blew its stirring call,
And thou didst rise to war with ancient creeds.
Then as the strong on weakness feeds,
So thronged the world around to taste thy blood;
While thou didst win what every nation needs,—
True freedom and just rule. Thus from the mud
Of servitude we rose, fresh-cleansed by nobler flood.

The fight for all the world was fought and won;
Then Teuton swords tasted again thy gore;
Hard was the fight: but when the day was done
Thy life stream flowed as ne'er it flowed before.
The world did seize the freedom that did pour
Fresh from thy crimson wounds, yet none did call
For cheers for France who paid. A jangling roar
Of triumph rent the air when thou didst fall—
“Proud France lies low” they cried; and that was all.

All hail, thou nation born of noble deed,
For some can honor still the land that gave
The fiery Calvin, with his mighty creed;
And some can honor still the pens so grave
That all the world did copy and did save.
Fair land, from thee we learned democracy
Through Savoy's vicar—great, inspired knave.
From thee we learned to think. And but for thee
We should be darkened still, uncultured and unfree.

THE TEUTON TOURNEY

THE morning dawns so proudly, the sun bears noble day.

The lists are set; and loudly the heralds call the fray.

The galleries filled with glory of beauteous world beside,
Await to see the story of deeds of Norman pride.

Our swords are boldly girded, our lances set in rest,
Our armor firmly bolted as foemen know the best;
With badges in our helmets, and visors closed, "Advance!
For George and good St. Denis, for Britain and for France."

The Teuton host advances, with rustle of the pines;
In might of many battles they charge in heavy lines.
We meet them as the rainbow doth meet the darkened cloud,

And cloud dispels in glory of rainbow looming proud.

Grim Siegfried's lance is broken, and Ingo's horse is felled,

Brunhilde bleedeth freely, where Hermann's host was held.

The Valkyre's turn their chariots, and wheel in wrath away;

Proud Wothan bows in silence, while beaten warriors pray.

Valhalla hears the rumble, where tumult boldly roars,
And sees the dying Teutons, but closes fast her doors;
"Return not here to glory, with shame upon your crest,
With armor pierced and broken by lances borne at rest."

The marshals name the victors, and heralds loud prolong

Their praises to the galleries, who carry on the song.
The Red Cross banner waveth, and Lilies fill the track,
For beaten is the Teuton, whose cross is evil Black.

Crusaders' swords have conquered where bolts of strife
were loosed,

We bow in fond thanksgiving for victory in the joust,
To God we sing our praises to Mary's greater Son,
To George and good St. Denis, for triumph we have
won.

1915.

THE ROUTE MARCH

O EARTHLY God of war!
With crown of iron ruddy-tipped,
Weary, our feet have often slipped.

Grant us once more
Respite from wandering, or we must

In bitter mood,
(O'er rotting food)

Lay down our packs, and smother in the dust.

O endless road of grey!

That lengthens ever as our eyes
Grow painful, too, with myriad tries

To pierce the day,
That rolls so slowly through sky,—

This endless trail
Of earth so pale

Burns through our feet, and mocks our prayer to die.

O bitter fiend of thirst!

Binding our throats with dusty cord,
Mocking with thought of wine outpoured,
Thou art the worst.

We march though praying, ere we fall,
For some swift shell

New hurled from hell,

To break our bonds and break us—road and all.

HYMN BEFORE ACTION

GOD of our land, we yield Thee praise;
Reverent, our hearts and voices raise.
Make us Thy true crusaders still;
Grant us Thy strength, Thy truth, Thy will.

Saxon, in earnest strife now stands,
Man who oft prayed with sin-stained hands.
Gaul, who hath oft denied Thy name,
Leaps to Thy task with god-like aim.

Roman and Russian pray once more,
Each prays for each in holy war:
For righteous victory purely won,—
We thank Thee, these can pray as one.

Grant to the Gaul Thy noble peace;
May Russian peasants find release;
Then grant to us the wrathful flame
That yet may purge the Teuton name.

God of all wars, Thou Lord of Lords,
Hallow as now we draw our swords;
May victory crown them through Thine aid,—
Victory in God's own true crusade.

1915.

THE NARROW PASS

O HARK to the song of war!
Who works with the might of men;
Whose will is fired by the wrath of God,
Now purging the earth again.

“My home is the lofty crag,
And it guardeth the narrow pass;
Before my walls an altar stands
Where chants an eternal mass.

“Behind me the boulders reach
To the throne that o’erlooks the bleak;
Before me rolls the pleasant vale,
Where voices of childhood speak.

“Each soul must attain my gate,
And Death is the keeper bold;
Who wins his way over conquered Death
Will mount to the throne of gold.

“He climbs to my dizzy home,
He laughs at the ogre’s sword;
Who turn aside to the pleasant vale
Shall never behold the Lord.

“These follow the lower trail,
Which leads through the lesser pass,
It leads them on the goddess Peace,
Who sleeps in the soft morass.

“But others must win their way,
And strive, though they seem o’erthrown;
They fall; but they open wide the gate
That others may reach the throne.

"These leap from their coarser clay,
And soar as the free o'er Death;
They climb the cloudsteps to the throne,
They hear what Jahveh saith.

"Lo, I am the giant War,
Who works with the nation's might;
Who conquers the death that guards my walls
Shall pass from the vale of night."

1916.

LANGEMARCK

"The Canadians saved the day"—*Sir John French.*

O CANADA! the foeman stamps the ground;
Why doth he rage, what terror hath he found?
 'Tis a Maple wall that the foemen feel,
 And that Maple wall we know;
 'Tis a Maple wall, with Canadian steel,
That holds the braggart foe.
O Canada! on Flanders' plains thy tree shall nobler
grow.

O Canada! where shines thy gleaming blade?
Where are those sons for whom we dearly prayed?
 At the Maple wall that the foemen feel,
 To the Maple wall they go;
 At that Maple wall, with Canadian steel,
They thwart the daunted foe,
O Canada! on Flanders' plains shall Maples ever grow.

FESTUBERT

WERE you there?
Mud and blood and evil smell,
And barking parapets of hell,
And each redoubt
That sputtered out
Its snapping death, and every shell
Are branded on your memory
Since Festubert.

Oh, wind so fair,
Ghosts were scattered on your path,
Each flying blindly in his wrath
To heaven or hell
(They could not tell).
And every thought and prayer man hath
Were thrown upon your fleeting breath
At Festubert.

And children there,
Story-seeking at the knee,
For tales of ghosts and chivalry,
Must listen here
With childish fear,
The tale that tells so bitterly
Why they have played at soldier games,
Since Festubert.

CONSECRATION DAY

August 4th, 1915

O UR fathers' God, we turn to Thee,
Purged by the pain we dread to feel;
Thy presence over land and sea
Makes firm our hearts, more strong our steel.
One nation, we would call on Thee,
To learn thy counsel and obey;
Make pure our purpose, set us free
From vaunting boasts this bitter day;
Guard Thou this Empire, east and west,
Save Thou this land we love the best.

Our fathers spoke with other speech
They prayed to Thee in varied forms;
May all their memories live to teach
Their children in the warring storms.
They fought for Thistle, Shamrock, Rose,
Or loved the Lily unto death;
Bless now as Maple Tree up-grows.
We chant its prayer in single breath.
Guide Thou the Empire, east and west,
Guard Thou this land we love the best.

God of the brave, bless Thou thine own:
Make us a sacrifice for all;
That Dollard's soul on hero's throne
May see us nobly, purely fall.
In danger's hour break Faction's hold,
Release that grip in peace we know;
That we may stand like those of old,—
Our nation's martyrs of Long Sault.
Unite our Empire east and west.
Guide Thou this land we love the best.

Great God of Battles, make us bold,—
We pray for power to smite our foes:
Yea, while our foes are Thine, withhold
The terror that the coward knows.
But should our foes be Thine no more,
And we a vaunting army roll,
Take back the power, lest we should soar
To Teuton pride, and lose our soul.
Purge thou our Empire, east and west;
Make clean this land we love the best.

Great Prince of Peace, save Thou our folk
From lust of chance to buy and sell;
May deeds at Langemarck unyoke
The bonds that linked our soul to hell.
Our banner still shall bear thy Cross,
The Flaming Heart beat one with ours,—
The strength to die in noble cause
Be proudest of our Empire's powers.
Be with our Empire, east and west;
Save this our land we love the best.

Then when the new crusading strife,
Like penance done, at last shall cease,
Lead us into the new-found life,
Be Thou our God in fruitful peace.
Purge us of sins of pride and gain,
That we as people sin no more;
That we may ne'er require again
Consuming fires of bitter war.
Guard Thou our Empire, east and west;
Save this our land we love the best.

WOODS OF FLANDERS

WOODY Flanders.
(Ploegsteert and St. Julien)

Why stand so gaunt with leafless arms,
So helpless 'gainst the storm's alarms?
Though shells are whining
Sun is shining.

Woods of Flanders.

(Sanctuary, Zillebeke,)

Why silent brown, why still and stark?
Why no green limbs or velvet bark?
Though men are dying,
Summer's flying.

Woods of Flanders.

Have you thought
That every shot

That pierced your beauty
On grim duty
Went there at a man's behest,
Unto the sun with all its light;
And every bitter angry night
The sun sank down into the west
And bore the message to the land
Whence came this khaki band?

Woods of Flanders.

(Ploegsteert and St. Julien,
Sanctuary, Zillebeke,)

Remember, you are not of Belgium, with its tiny flag
unfurled,
But remember, by the dust beneath you, you are of the
world.

THE VOICE FROM THE STORM

A VOICE from out the wild,
Yea, thunder between the peaks,—
The cloud obeys as a child,
For Jahveh the Holy speaks.

A voice from out the storm,
Yea, law in the heart of war,—
The tempest takes clearer form,
Since Jahveh contends with Thor.

A voice from out the grave,
Yea, life from the crimsoned sod,—
The righteous grow calmly brave,
And Jahveh alone is God.

THE SOMME

THERE'S a valley by the road
 Beyond Albert,
The perfume of the hay, new-mowed,
 And trees and grass were pleasant there.
 But since the German seed was sown
 Into the world and now has grown
 There is but death where once was known
 Our Pozières.

There was a village, fair though small,
 And by it yet
The grass has grown up green and tall,
 Though trenches mar the field, all set
 With crosses since the Germans came,
 And every cross has some one's name,
 To his own glory, and the fame
 Of Courcelette.

The valleys of a million dead
 Beyond the Somme
Have marguerites and poppies red,
 That grow 'twixt cannon-wheel and bomb.
 But thicker than the stars at night,
 Or wild weeds nodding in the light,
 Are wooden crosses painted white,
 Along the Somme.

VIMY RIDGE

MONT ST. ELOI'S grey turrets point to heaven
In suppliant attitude of prayer,
(If any gods be there
Since Huns full blast from hell set forth.)
In rain and sun they pray
For all who fell that day,
From Arras to the north,
From St. Eloi to Vimy and Souchez.

Mont St. Eloi has seen the Teutons come,
When first they felt the Prussian lord,
And first cast down the sword
Of chivalry, and sought the fame
Of Attilla and Hun;
And every summer's sun
Has seen the Teuton's shame,
Has seen in this wrecked altar what he's done.

Mont St. Eloi has seen the gallant flood
Of martyrs storm the German lines,
But never yet repines;
For every man on Vimy's slope
Has lived his life,—at least
His bayonet pointed east;
And still there lived the hope
That time would come to slay the Teuton beast.

Mont St. Eloi has seen the Maple Leaf
That comes pure green with life in spring.
When larks and thrushes sing.
And, bearing it, a solid line
Of khaki from the West,
The princes of the best,
Whose blood like altar wine
Was poured out free, and purged the Vimy crest.

Mont St. Eloi's grey turrets point to heaven
In suppliant attitude of prayer,
(If any gods be there
Since Huns' full blast from hell set forth.)
In rain and sun they pray
For all the dead who lay
From Oppy to the North,
From Farbus to Givenchy and Souchez.

THE SONG OF VIMY RIDGE

SING me a song of Vimy Ridge,
Where he was killed in the twisted lines,
Where craters yawn in the broken trees,
By crosses that stand beneath the breeze,
That moans and whines.

Nay, for the song of Vimy Ridge
Was sung one day by the booming gun;
Its notes were thundered and bellowed forth
From Willerval to the red-tiled north,
But now 'tis done.

Sing me a song of Vimy Ridge,
Its tangled wire and its chalky lanes,
Its thousand graves and caves and dens,
From Farbus Wood to the walls of Lens,
Where he was slain.

Nay, for the song of Vimy Ridge
Was sung when cannon were crashing through;
Such notes are sung to the gods of war,
Who live on death with its slime and gore,
But not to you.

THE COMRADE IN WHITE

LIKE a cloud that lowly passeth, searching on a
summer day
For its home that ever fadeth in the vastness of
the grey,
So he wanders proudly, gently, royal beauty round his
head,
As the cloud that crosses sunbeam, shivers rays of gold
and red.—
As the cloud that gently veileth sun's bright, gleaming
burning face,
Shutting light from sombre places where the light would
bring disgrace,
Bringing health and purer vigor, like the raindrops on
the grasses,—
'Tis the genius of our nation. Bow while Honor's spirit
passes.

IN A FRENCH ORCHARD

O H Mother Cybele! Why hast thou formed
Flowers of the Spring and the scent of fair June,
To wash the pure air of the heaven in love-wine
Which stirs us to dreaming, though leaving us
soon?

We dream in the shade of the orchard thou givest
In spell of the perfume, in lull of the noon.

Oh, Mother Cybele! eager we pray,
Give us the truth, not the semblance of dreams;
Oh, why hast thou shown us the form of the oak tree,
So perfect in outline and shadow, it seems
The verdure of heaven? Our longing for beauty
Is constant and pure as the rippling of streams.

Oh, Mother Cybele! what if we stray
To altars of Baal in odorous grove?
Though thou art more pure—as dreams of the future
Are purer than present—yet Baal ever strove
To win to him children of Cybele's temple,
By scent of the rose bloom and lilacs of mauve.

Oh, Mother Cybele! tending our growth
So far into manhood—as apples in June
We form now the blemish which ripens in harvest.
So grant us the love, not of night, but of noon.
Sweet Mother Cybele! though not with the cymbals
We worship and pray thou wilt bless us full soon.

THE TRENCH POPPY

Poppies are common along disused trenches.

FAIR poppy, where have you come from?
O tell me what your roots have seen!
“I only know the sun is warm
I cannot tell you what has been.”

Bright poppy, why are you crimson
Upon the trench like rubies set?
“I only know I am as fair
As any flower on parapet.”

Frail poppy, why are you drooping,
Although the sun is low in sky?
“I cannot say—but I must mourn
Whenever days and colors die.”

O poppy! I had a comrade,
Who fell where now you smile so free.
“I have no memories of your love,
But Mother Earth is sweet to me.”

THE PIPES O' WAR

THE rumble rose and fell,
And Arras lay as still
As she has lain these years
With grim unspoken fears,
And scarce breathed hopes, until
We burst the bonds from Farbus to Gavrelle.

Adown the dusty road the air
Has borne more regular a beat
Than grumbling howitzers repeat;
It is the throb of drums—and there
The rise and fall—
We know the call,
Familiar as the whine of shells we knew before,—
O' the pipes, my lad, the pipes o' war.

Adown the dusty road, we see
The slowly moving line of brown,
And to the music blowing down
Side to side the kilts swing free.
We know the way
Of tartans gay,

As they swing to drums that rattle before
Wi' the pipes, my lad, the pipes o' war.

Oh! have you heard how the wind in the mountains
Murmurs in tune with the streams in the glen;
Or the splashing of bubbles in fanciful fountains
Softens the laughter of children and men?

Oh! have you heard in the crash of the battle
The faint rising wail of the tune that we know;
Or seen in the mud and the dark of the battle
The green of the tartan that swings to and fro?

Come to the trenches !

Sons of the men who were born on the hilltops ;

 Come to the battle ,

 Death of the battle ,

 Slime of the battle ,

Sons who are proud of their tartan and hosetops .

Dreaming of love,—are you, Jock, in your tartan ?

Dreaming of peace, in the sight of the tartan ?

Come to the trenches to work, slay as before,

 “To kill” is the slogan

 Here of the pipers ,

 The pipers o’ war .

Come to the battle !

Lads who near wept when you left the far hilltops ,

 Out to the trenches ,

 Fear of the trenches ,

 Filth of the trenches ,

Silently marching in tartan and hosetops .

Dreaming of Jean—are you, Jock, to the pibroch ?

Dreaming of home—to the skirl of the pibroch ?

Come to the trenches to kill, die as you swore ;

 To die is the promise

Here of the pipers , the pipers o’ war .

Oh ! have you seen how the grass in the forest

 Bends with the dance that is piped from the trees ;

Or the clouds that are gliding in rhythm before us

 When riding above on the wings of the breeze ?

Oh ! have you seen how the boys in the evening

 March to the lilt of the pipes and the drums ;

While far in the east rolls the thunder of evening

 That heralds a battle when grey morning comes ?

How wild they sound adown the way,
The same as since the birth of hills
They stirred the fire that loves, that kills.
Oh drums! how gallantly to-day
Ye roll the tune
We learned so soon
When first we grappled with the Hun before
To the pipes, my lad, the pipes o' war.

Adown the dusty road, now dim,
They're swinging to the dying wail
Of pipes—these lads who dare not fail.
Through the dusk their battle hymn
Has grown less gay;
Oh God! to-day,
Grant still the victory, as thou didst before,
To the pipes, Oh God, the pipes o' war.

*The thunder rises. Hear
The hungry “archies” burst,
To catch that silvered Hun
Manœuvring in the sun.
All else is still as grave accurst
The ruins stand like grasses, crushed and sear.*

TO OUR RUSSIAN BROTHER OFFICERS

"One battalion sent twenty-eight officers, twenty non-commissioned officers and only three men into the charge—the remainder ran away."

THE cannon thunders the salute;
And all the martial hosts
Of heaven's sacred coasts
Stand to arms for the salute.

From Roland and St. Louis,
From our own lion-hearted one,
From Henry's few at Agincourt,
From every knightly sire who won
His fame in battles not a few,
To duty and his order true,—
From all of these, the lowered banner;
From all of these in martial manner,
The salute—
For knights of Korniloff and Kaledin,
For you who died to enter in.

They offered you the peace for which you yearned,
They offered you the fame of statesmen: you have
spurned

The comfort and the fame;
'Tis better taunts of shame

From that wild rabble. Never from their hand
Can you take gifts, for yours is to command.

And if the rebels stay,
You know the knightly way,
You order and obey;

Into the wire, the meshes of death,
You charged with the order upon your breath.

They offered you the wealth of prince and czar,
They offered you the fame of hero, but you are

All nobles and are sworn

To battle. You are born

To prouder titles. Your order ne'er allows
Such gifts of gold as price of all your vows.

And though your eyes have seen

Your emperor made mean,

You keep your honor clean;

Alone, and in scorn, you mounted again

The parapet boldly, as gentlemen.

We comrades, reverently salute;

And all the mighty ranks,

Of Britons and of Franks,

Stand to arms for the salute.

From Scotland's rocky mountains,

From our own Empire's far-flung coasts,

From England's million maimed and dead,

From gallant France's battered hosts,

From every knight who holds his caste

A sacred trust unto the last,

From all of these, the lowered banner;

From all of these, in martial manner,

The salute—

For knights of Korniloff and Kaledin,

For you who died to enter in.

THE CALL FROM OVERSEAS

August 4th, 1917

THE same old throb of the marching feet,
The song of the three long years we hear,
And the smart quick pace on the paved street
Is with us again; for the rolling beat
Must sound in our ears for another year.

Britain stands firm, and her sons go out,—
Ready and armed, as in years ago,
More ready, well armed, and the throb without
But tells us the same as that eager shout
We heard when our troops were a gaudy show.

It tells us that Britons are born for wars,—
Never an end to the Khaki line,—
The nation is marching along in fours,
And the fights of the past, with their gaping sores,
Have made the dear island a warrior shrine.

The enemy sprang at our throat that year,
And we sent but a few grim lads along,
Whom we thought were but idlers “over here”;
But they stood like rock, for they knew no fear;
And the war has made them a martyr throng.

Then others went out, and more, and more,—
Till now we are sending our last brave sons;
Yea, even the old and the weakly ones
Are learning the vigorous art of war
With bullets and bayonets, bombs and guns.

They tramp on the pavement, just as the rest,—
Not khakied yet—and the pale, prim youths,
Who thought that business and ease were best,
Are out to learn—at their king’s behest,—
That soldiers come near to the deeper truths.

I see a beard, and a worn grey head,
(But the hand holds the butt of a rifle there)
And he thinks of a son and a brother,—dead;
Who climbed to death when the subaltern said,—
That laughing boy who had known no care!

Sons of the greater Britains, hear!
You answered at first and you gave your best;
Your sons went happy, nor felt a fear;
But know that the war's not a strange wild year,
But a great new life, with a great new test.

Your first have gone, and they went to death,—
Now where are the others to take their place?
Does your heart believe that while one man's breath
Remains, he must do as his sovereign saith,
Or else it is worse than pain—disgrace?

Britain has ordered herself to war:
While you still make it a kind of game
To play until peace returns once more;
And you carry on as in days before,
With never a thought of duty—or shame.

The Motherland acts at a single will.
A word of command by a soldier said,
And the nation moves; for it feels the thrill
That comes with the thought "We are fighting still,"—
The pace was set by the first—the dead.

Then arm! with cannons and rifles, too,
Yea, every person within the land;
For so shall we learn how the nations grew,
And win our fame at the great "Stand to"—
Or die—at an officer's word of command.

THE HINDENBURG LINES

THERE is mud, red mud, and a sea of holes,
Where the dead are deep,
And the thousands sleep
While the howitzer chorus rolls;
And the waste is far
Where the Verey light shines
Like a drunken star
On the long lone path,
And its trail of wrath,
To the filth of the Hindenburg lines.

There is pain, grim pain, and a pool of blood
Where the raid passed by
Under cloudy sky,
While the howitzer roared in mud.
Here the guns repeat,
And the thundering mines,
Making death more sweet
Than the long lone fight,
In the winter night
For the slime of the Hindenburg lines.

There are dreams, soft dreams, and a nation's prayer,
As the shells go by
In the flashing sky
While the howitzers rend the air.
And the thoughts that stray
When the khaki man pines
For the better day,
Make a holy land
Where the Teuton planned
But the might of the Hindenburg lines.

CAMBRAI

THE throbbing night thunders the hours,
The cloud veil lights in the flash.
Oh! gods, with your wonderful powers,
You have no thunder nor lightning
So frightening
With death in its crash.
“Gun fire! artillery!”
“Well done, artillery!
Carry on! carry on!”

The rumbling dawn pulsates with fear,
The grim forms stalk in the gloom.
Oh! gods, let your demons draw near,
Hell cannot rival the terror
And horror
Of tanks and their doom.
“Ready, the Tank Corps!”
“Well done, the Tank Corps!
Carry on! carry on!”

The rattling day sweats in its pain,
The men charge, fiercely arrayed.
Oh! gods, all your wonderful rain
Never can cover the muddy
And bloody
Remains of this raid.
“Forward, the Infantry!”
“Well done, the Infantry!
Carry on! carry on!”

The screaming air 's circled all 'round,
The stormcloud is riven in twain.
Oh! gods, not your bird from the ground
Can soar to that distant
Insistent

Dim speck of a plane.
"Contact, the Flying Corps!"
"Well done, the Flying Corps!
Carry on! carry on!"

The traitor would barter our name;
In false fear shrink from the sword.
Home folk! for our honor and fame
You have resisted the clamoring,
Stammering,
And wavering horde.
"Steady, the People!"
"Well done, the People!
Carry on! carry on!"

THE FIRST WHO CAME

August 4th, 1917. Somewhere in France

DOWN the snowy cloud
With rainbank for a shroud,
The first who fell, march on—a mighty host;
Battalions come in line,
And each one bears its sign,
The wooden cross of white on every ghost.

Men of every clime
Are on the roads of time,
The long route march, till end of time arrives,
Still eastward out of France,
In victory's great advance,
Go thirty thousand lost Canadian lives.

Not a sound of drum,
No rustling, nor a hum,
So silently they pass and fade within
Short distance of their goal,
These men who paid the toll,
The thirty thousand men who'll always win.

Still we must carry on,
Since all the rest are gone,
On earth, in mine, through cloud we press ahead:
But as we crown each crest,
Our backs still to the West,
We see our leaders—shades of comrades dead.

Down the snowy cloud
Beyond the gallant crowd,
The thirty thousand men, the first who fell;
Canadians, every one,
They march beyond the sun,
To heaven, for they won their fight in hell.

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